



For Immediate Release

BC Rail must become more competitive, efficient & cost-effective -- forest companies say

Vancouver, B.C. (August 18, 2003) – A group of the province's largest forest products companies has expressed support for the government's plans to identify a private sector railway to operate and revitalize BC Rail, provided the result is a competitive, efficient, service-oriented railway.

The British Columbia Forest Industry requires an efficient, cost-effective rail carrier that will enhance service, offer better pricing and guarantee competitive access to all Class I Railways that transport forest products to ports and into the North American marketplace.

Ian May, speaking on behalf of Abitibi-Consolidated Inc., Canfor Corporation, Slocan Forest Products Ltd., Weldwood of Canada Ltd. and West Fraser said:

"Something has to be done. With the current debt load, revenues are insufficient to adequately maintain the asset and service levels.

"Our provincial railway is a vital link in the transportation chain. The forest products industry accounts for more than 75 per cent of BC Rail's revenue and transportation is the second highest cost (next to fibre) for forest products shippers," May said.

"We support the provincial government's efforts to ensure that a competitive, efficient, service-oriented transportation network is in place to meet the needs of our export based economy."

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